

AN INTERVIEW WITH RUTH D. ACHARD AND MARGARET D. McDONALD: A CONTRIBUTION TO A SURVEY OF LIFE IN CARSON VALLEY FROM FIRST SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE 1950S

Interviewees: Ruth D. Achard and Margaret D. McDonald

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Description

Ruth Achard and Margaret McDonald, daughters of H. F. Dangberg, Jr., were born in Carson Valley on the historic Dangberg Home Ranch—Margaret in 1901 and Ruth in 1906—where they have lived most of their lives. In this 1984 interview, the sisters discuss Dangberg family history, life on the Home Ranch in the early part of the century, and changes in the operation of the vast Dangberg ranches over time.

Of particular interest are descriptions of types of household organization and management of family affairs that date to another era and perhaps another place—the Westphalia from which H. F. Dangberg emigrated in 1848. Throughout the interview there are glimpses of western agrarian prosperity and of a graceful way of life held together by a clearly defined division of labor.

Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg established the H. F. Dangberg Land and Livestock Company as a corporation in 1902, with his wife and family as stockholders, thus precluding any fragmentation or sale of family holdings as a consequence of his death. Well into this century, most members of the extended family had a role in advancing the Dangberg fortunes. By the late 1930s deteriorating relationships within the family and a depressed economy for ranchers had led to some decline in the once dominant position of the Dangberg interests in Carson Valley.

The reader will find descriptions of changing ranch technology and references to a number of important Carson Valley figures. Some attention is given to the experiences of Washoe Indians and other ethnic minorities in the valley. Appended to the text is a facsimile reproduction of a statement written by H. F. Dangberg, Jr., in 1939, whose original is in the possession of the sisters, Margaret and Ruth.

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An Oral History Conducted by R.T. King
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University of Nevada Oral History Program

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PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber
Director, UNOHP
July 2012

ORIGINAL PREFACE

The University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) engages in systematic interviewing of persons who can provide firsthand accounts or descriptions of events, people and places that are the raw material of Nevada history. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians customarily have turned. While the properly conducted oral history is a reliable source, verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the UNOHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be approached with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper

accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the UNOHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherence. No type font contains symbols for the physical gestures and diverse vocal modulations which are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that, in the absence of any orthography for such non-verbal communication, totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. Therefore, while keeping alterations to a minimum the UNOHP will, in preparing a text:

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled;

b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context; and

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible.

There will be readers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without even the minimal editing that occurred in the production of this text; they are directed to the tape recording.

Copies of all or part of this work and the tape recording from which it is derived are available from:

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INTRODUCTION

Ruth Achard and Margaret McDonald are daughters of H. F. Dangberg, Jr. They were born in Carson Valley on the historic Dangberg Home Ranch (Margaret in 1901 and Ruth in 1906) where they have lived most of their lives. In this 1984 interview the sisters discuss Dangberg family history, life on the Home Ranch in the early part of the century, and changes in the operation of the Dangberg ranches over time.

Of particular interest are descriptions of types of household organization and management of family affairs that date to another era and perhaps to another place—the Westphalia from which H. F. Dangberg emigrated in 1848. Throughout the interview there are glimpses of prosperity and of a graceful way of life held together by a clearly defined division of labor. Heinrich Friedrich Dangberg established the H. F. Dangberg Land and Livestock Company as a corporation in 1902, with his wife and family as stockholders, thus precluding any fragmentation or sale of family holdings as a consequence of his death. Well into this

century, most members of the extended family had a role in advancing the Dangberg fortunes. By the late 1930s it appears that deteriorating relationships within the family and a depressed economic environment for ranchers had led to a decline in the once dominant position of the Dangberg interests in Carson Valley.

The reader will find in these pages, in addition to family history, descriptions of changing ranch technology and references to a number of important Carson Valley figures. Some attention is also given to the experiences of Washo Indians and other ethnic minorities in the valley. Appended to the text is a facsimile reproduction of a statement written by H. F. Dangberg, Jr. in 1939. The original is in the possession of the sisters, Margaret and Ruth.



RUTH ACHARD
1984



MARGARET McDONALD
1984

AN INTERVIEW WITH RUTH ACHARD AND MARGARET McDONALD

R. T. King: I'd like to begin today's interview by having the 2 of you tell me something about yourselves before we get on to talking about the history of the valley and of the Dangberg Ranch.

Ruth Achard: We were all born here on the ranch, right here in this house. I was born in August of 1906; and Margaret was born in 1901, weren't you? January, 1901.

Margaret McDonald: Yes.

Can you tell me the names of your mother and father?

A: Do you want her maiden name?

Yes.

A: Gertrude Heironymous. And Dad was Henry Fred Dangberg, Jr.

What about your grandparents' names?

A: Grandmother's name was Margaret Ferris Dangberg, and Grandfather's name was Henry Fred Dangberg.

Have you lived on the ranch all of your life?

A: Always, yes.

I'd like you to think back, if you can, to your childhood and to tell me a few things about growing up on the Dangberg Ranch. What sorts of things did children do here? Did you have the same sorts of responsibilities, as far as chores go, that children on smaller ranches did?

A: No, we didn't have any chores. [laughs]

Well, tell me what it was like to be a Dangberg, then.

A: We just played. We simply had such a charmed life when we were young. It was really a lovely life, because there was always a lot of help and we didn't have to do anything. We just played.

And you went to school where?

A: In Minden. For years we went to school in a horse and buggy.

M: Oh, yes. Our neighbors over here had a cart and a horse—of course, they had to have a horse for the cart—but they came through the field and picked us up here. Sometimes there were about 5 of us, and I had to sit right under the horse's tail, which I didn't like! [laughter]

What was the neighbor's name?

M: They were the Gödeckes. Now there aren't any of those left. They're all gone.

There's a Roy Gödecke, who owns a dairy on the other side of Gardnerville.

M: Yes, he's the son of one of them.

Did your parents ever take you to school in the cart, or was that always something the neighbors did?

A: We used to have a man who did it on the ranch, too, that would take us over and come and get us. But we never did...

And then a little later, our uncle who lived with us—Uncle George Dangberg, who was a perfectly adorable man—he had a huge Lexington [in which] he would take us to school and bring us home, and that was wonderful. He did that for years.

A car—it was a Lexington. He loved his cars and things. And he used to take us to school and bring us home in his car.

[The fact that you had no chores] strikes me as being somewhat odd. I've talked to a lot of people in the valley who grew up here, and they always recount all the chores that they had. Were your parents opposed to that? Did they have other plans for you?

M: No, they always had help. We had Chinese cooks, and we weren't allowed in the kitchen; and we had Indian women that did the washing and ironing and cleaning, and all those things. So, I don't know, we were always busy doing something when....

A: And we had a gardener that did all the gardening. We had help for everything, and we just.. .we played.

Uncle George was just darling; he had a tent made for us out in back and put a little stove in it. We used to cook out there and have parties, and [chuckling] have little children over from town to play with us.

We never did anything, did we? I don't remember ever having chores. We rode horses a lot.

It sounds as if the type of life you led as a child, then, was not typical of the kind of life led by most children on ranches here in the valley at that time, in the first 20 years of the twentieth century.

A: No, it really wasn't, was it?

What sort of plans did your parents have for you as you were growing up?

A: I really don't know; we all had to take music lessons, and we were all sent away to private schools. I think they just wanted us to find ourselves, which we didn't do very well. [laughs]

What private schools were you and your sister sent to?

A: We went to a private school in Piedmont, California, which was Miss Ransom's.

How old were you when you went to Miss Ransom's?

A: I was about 14. And I had a younger sister who went there when she was a freshman in high school; she went all 4 years. I went for 2, and my sister went for 4. But I had to go to school up here for a while, to the high school in Gardnerville.

Did you graduate from high school in Gardnerville?

A: No, from her [Miss Ransom's] school down there.

After having graduated from high school, what did you do?

A: Well, I went to college for a while, and [Margaret] went to college for a while. I felt that I wasn't getting anything out of it, so I stopped.

What college did you go to?

A: I went to the University of Nevada for a while, then the University of California.

That's interesting. Very few people were going to the University of Nevada at that time; and you must have been among a small minority of women.

A: Well, we thought it would be sort of nice to go because Mother had been there. She was, I guess, the second graduating class at the University of Nevada. Wasn't that about the second graduating class?

M: Normal school... 1896, wasn't it?

A: Yes, when she graduated. And we thought it would be sort of fun to go because she'd gone, but I didn't like it at all, then.

And then you went to [the University of California at] Berkeley. What was it that you didn't like about Berkeley?

A: Just petrified me, it was too large. I was really frightened.

What were you studying when you were at Berkeley?

A: I didn't care what I took. We took philosophy and the things that I didn't like very much, and it all frightened me.

In talking to some of the other families who have ranched in this valley, for the past 100 years or more, I've learned that more often than not, it had been determined that the women and the female offspring were not going to have very much to do with operating the ranch when they became adults. Some people have told me this was due to a certain traditional German approach to it; others have other reasons for saying this. Would you care to offer any opinions about that as it applies to your own family, the Dangberg family? Were you and your sisters ever given the opportunity to have an active role in the operation of the ranch?

A: No. But there were so many brothers, you know, it would.... Everybody stayed out; just the men did it.

M: My father was against women working, and he didn't want to tell us anything at the time, did he?

A: No.

M: "Stay home with your mother! Help your mother!" That was the way that most people did around here, so I don't know.

Did either of you ever have any aspirations toward having an active role in ranching?

M: I would have liked to run the ranch, but I wasn't smart enough. I went to work in the office for a while. When Dad was away one day, I went to work there, and the bookkeeper said he'd teach me everything. And when Dad came back, I was working. He didn't quite know what to make of it, but he finally condescended to let me stay there.

How long did you work, then, in the office?

M: About 6 years.

In what period was that?

M: Nineteen twenty-three, maybe.. .I don't know, till 1930.

What led you to finally leave the office or to quit that kind of work?

M: Oh, I just wanted to quit. [chuckles]

So it would appear, then, that neither of you were getting any training that would prepare you to doing anything on the ranch; and that apparently didn't matter, because you weren't going to be given that opportunity, anyway. What sort of plans did you have for yourselves?

A: I just had none. I really just.. .that's what bothers me. Because...I don't know, I

think it was our rearing; we were just never inspired to go ahead and do anything, but just do nothing. My father didn't want us to do anything; he just wanted us to be home.

About how old were you when you got married?

A: I was 24.

And what about Margaret?

M: I was old enough to know better. [laughter]

Did you continue to live here in the Carson Valley after you were married?

A: No, I lived in San Francisco. And then came the Depression. Then when you couldn't eat, you had to do something, so I came home. I wish I had never. I should not have done it, but I did come home, because there was nothing to...it was so hard.

What did you find here on the ranch when you came back in the Depression? Was it hit as hard by the Depression as...?

A: No. The stock market was the first one that was hit. My husband was a stockbroker, and that was really very hard. And when I got back here, the ranches were not hurt yet. There was always enough to eat on ranches, and you knew if you didn't do anything, you could manage to live all right during the Depression. So that's what I did.

Did you stay on the ranch throughout the Depression?

A: Yes, with my baby, my son. He was little. My father said anything that he had

belonged to the 2 of us, too, so we stayed here, which was very nice of him.

Did your husband accompany you?

A: No, he stayed down there looking for work, and he didn't get it.

Now what about you, Mrs. McDonald? Did you come back to the ranch?

M: Yes, I came back.. I don't know. In 1940 I went to work for the department of highways—used to be the department of highways; it's now the department of transportation—and I worked there from 1940 to 1967.

A: We really did all go to work afterwards. I worked in the department, too. For 27 years I worked for the highway department.

Did you continue to live on the ranch here while you were doing that?

A: Yes.

So in a sense, except for a brief period in the 1920's and perhaps in the 1930's, both of you have lived on this ranch all of your lives?

A: Always, yes.

All right. I know that you've been taking some notes and you've been looking at old sources of information and you've talked to other people in the valley in preparation for this interview.

If we can, I'd like you to tell me now what you know about how your grandparents established this ranch, and then let's have a chronological development of the ranch right up to the very

present time—the phases that it's gone through. When [your grandparents] first came in here, we were talking earlier about the fact that the land was not well suited to cultivation, and that it required a great deal of preparation. Can you tell me something about when your grandfather came in and established the ranch and how he went about setting it up, as far as you know, from family records and stories you've heard and so forth.

A: Well, from family records we find that he came here in 1857. He'd originally gone to the Klauber Ranch and he left there. And when he came back, Bill Thorington had taken his cottage down there that he had. Grandfather knew that he didn't dare to fight with him, so he left and he came up here and started this place. He was there in 1856; then he came here in 1857.

What did he find when he got here? What did the land look like?

A: They tell me...people say that there was grass by the rivers, but back further was sagebrush.

And of course, that wouldn't support the kind of agriculture that was necessary in order to make a living. So what did he do? How did he go about changing that specifically?

A: We just guess, but we think he had Indians get the sagebrush up, and he cultivated the ground. We know that he didn't have very many teams nor very many wagons; they must have had to do an awful lot by hand to start with.

You were telling me earlier that you thought that they used simple hand hoes....

A: Yes, grubbing hoes to get the sagebrush out. And he knew that where there was sagebrush there was good ground.

Of course, he had to irrigate the land. Did the family ever talk about the initial steps of irrigation that he took?

A: No, I've never heard them talk about it. I know that he built boxes [water-boxes: wooden box-like devices placed at the junctures of irrigation ditches. Containing a gate sliding in the vertical plane, these boxes were (and are) used to divert water along selected paths to the fields.] around for irrigating, and I know that his oxen brought the rocks to build the dam that they put in to fill around the boxes and things. Grams [Grandmother] always talked about how hard he worked with his boxes and the ox teams that brought the rocks in to do that. I think lots of it was done by hand, but there was not very much help because they didn't have very much.

Apparently the end of the Bonanza in Virginia City had quite an impact on the economy of the Carson Valley. Do you recall any stories about that within your own family?

A: We didn't hear anything. I never heard anything about it. Only thing I ever heard is....

M: Well, they sold all kinds of hay and eggs and butter and things like that to Virginia City, didn't they?

A: Yes, but when Virginia City collapsed, then they wouldn't have to go up there and sell those things. I've never heard them talk about it; I've just heard about them taking

hay up there and the things they took, but I've never heard about afterwards, if I heard them at all. I think they went to Placerville; they went up to Bodie; they went other places with their products.

Your grandfather managed to accumulate more land than any other single individual in this valley, as far as I know. Can you tell me how your grandfather succeeded in putting together this large landholding here in the Carson Valley in a rather brief period of time?

A: Well, he had his friends come over from Germany. My grandfather came from Halle, Germany. It's close to Minden, and I don't know what part of Germany it is. [Westphalia] That's where he came from. He sent for his friends to come over, and then he would put them on so many acres of ground that he'd take, and put it in their names because he could only get 160 acres at a time.

He'd pay for everything they did and take care of the.... They were on this property, and then after so many years, it would revert. You know, it would belong to those people, and then it would revert to him; he'd have it put in his name. I think that's how he got a lot of his first property. [The Homestead Act of 1862 permitted the head of a family to secure up to, but not more than, 160 acres of public land at \$1.25 to \$2.50 per acre. Through informal, extra-legal agreements it was possible for individuals to subvert the intent of the act and to acquire larger tracts of public land by subsidizing surrogate homesteaders.]

Which brings us up to relationship that he had with the Springmeyers. Can you tell us about that?

A: Yes! [laughter] I shouldn't tell that, should I? Well, all we know is what we've heard: that Mr. Springmeyer was put on this ranch over here, which is east of us. And when Grandfather went to get his ranch back, Mr. Springmeyer said, "This is mine now." And so Grandfather never. . .he couldn't do anything about it, because it wasn't very legal to put these people on the ranches anyway, I imagine, in their name and then take it back to his. I imagine it wasn't. But that's what happened, we understand. I hope the story's true; I'm not sure.

You believe that it's true, though?

A: I believe that it's true.

I've heard the same thing from some other people, as well, and it probably is. So then the Dangbergs and the Springmeyers apparently didn't get along with one another for...?

A: Oh, they were really, really vicious enemies for many years! They fought about everything—about water, anything they fought about.

Can you give me some examples of what you're talking about—the kind of feud that existed between the 2?

A: I don't know, do you?

M: No.

A: I just know that they fought. And I can remember when I was a little girl, Dad telephoning Mother and saying that the Springmeyers were suing him for something about water, I imagine, and I know he won.

But I have no concrete... anything about it, because they didn't talk about it very much.

Has that feud finally subsided, as we approach the end of the twentieth century?

A: With our family; not with all the family. I don't think it will ever end, do you? [Aside to Margaret McDonald]

So your grandfather managed to put together substantial holdings here in the valley. He was, as I understand it, somewhat enlightened in his approach to agriculture, and particularly to irrigation. He's best known for a number of innovative approaches to managing water, I think, in the valley. This brings us up almost to your childhood, by the time that your parents were finally running the ranch. Or were they actually running the ranch? I don't fully understand the relationship that existed among the various offspring of the original Dangbergs. What was the situation when you were born here? Who was in charge of the Dangberg Home Ranch?

M: They formed a corporation in 1904. And then the 3 brothers were running it. Of course, there were more in the family, but they eventually.., oh, I guess they floated stock, didn't they? Each one had so many shares. How many, I don't know, but there were Uncle John, Uncle Clarence... there were 5, weren't there, in the family? Five children—4 boys and 1 daughter.

Can you give me the names?

M: Well, Dad was Fred. And the next brother was John, and then Uncle George, and then....

A: Auntie. Mrs. Greenfield... she was Eva Greenfield.

M: Eva. And the baby was Clarence, Uncle Clarence.

And Clarence was the one who owned the C.O.D. [Clarence O. Dangberg] Garage downtown?

A: Yes.

And who were the 3 brothers who were running the ranch, as part of the...?

M: The oldest ones—Fred, John and George.

But do you know anything about why the ranch was made a corporation, rather than being turned over to one member of the family, as opposed to another.. .or rather than being parceled up?

A: To save money, I think, because it would be taxed, so....

Because of the inheritance tax?

A: Yes.

And that was done before your grandfather's death?

A: Yes. I can remember Dad saying they had got their papers ready to form a corporation, and Grandfather was so sick that he couldn't sign his name. I think they had to hold his hand to sign his name on it, when they were trying to form the corporation. [See appendix] Grandmother had half the stock, and half of it was divided between 5 children. Uncle George ran this side of the ranch and

the cattle; he also had charge of that. And Dad had charge of the office and all the buying and selling and the business management part of it. And Uncle John had the east side of the valley to watch.

The family was, I believe, running sheep as well as cattle at that time, wasn't it?

A: Yes.

And who had charge of the sheep? Was that John?

A: John, I think.

M: Yes.

About when did the Dangberg Corporation stop running sheep?

A: They still had a few when it was sold.

When it was finally sold? It must have been very few, though. They cut back on it considerably, didn't they?

A: They came back in. They had maybe 2 bands when it was finally sold. But they used to have 5, didn't they? About 5 bands or 6?

M: Oh, yes.

Earlier you were telling me something about the fact that Indians had played an important part in helping to clear the land here. I understand that Washo Indians were important as ranch hands on a number of ranches here in the valley. Can you think back to your childhood and tell me what role they may have played? What recollections do you have of Washos here on your ranch?

A: Oh, they were always with us. I think they had little houses down here on the river. The men were.. they used them for haying, didn't they, always? They were in the hay crew. They didn't do very much in the wintertime. But in the summer they had them digging ditches, fixing a fence, and mainly on their hay crews.

Did they use them as cowboys any, as buckaroos?

A: I've only known one that was.

Who was that?

A: One of the Smokey boys.

Can you recall his name, his first name?

A: What was the Smokey boy's name that used to ride horses? Carnegie?

M: Huntington or Carnegie, one of them.

A: Can't remember whether it was Huntington or Carnegie. One of the Smokey boys [chuckling], and I don't remember which one it was. He's the only one I remember ever riding around. But they always had 3 or 4 riders here for the cattle.

What were the women doing—the Washo women?

A: Well, they came in here and washed; we had some that washed for us and ironed for us and cleaned for us. But they made their baskets...I don't remember...that's all they ever did around here.

I believe there was a rather prominent basket maker by the name of Susie Dick. Can you

remember anything about Susie Dick that you can tell us for the tape? What was her relationship to your family?

A: Susie Dick came to work for Mother when I was born, and she worked for us until she could not work any more. She came religiously every Monday morning and washed; and every Tuesday and ironed; and every Friday and Saturday and cleaned. She used to walk from Minden or walk from her little house over here. We could always depend on Susie; she was always here. We have never had anybody since.

Was Susie something like a nanny? Did she help raise you?

A: No, not really. You didn't have them that close to you in a house.

M: The Indians had a little village way out there on the river. I don't think you could find it now, even. But they had little wooden houses and tents, and they lived there. In the summertime, when they had them for hay hands, they lived right out by this box up here, this dam. That dam has been changed since they were here; it's been enlarged.

You were going to tell me something about Susie Dick. You said that she didn't actually serve as a nanny, that the relationship wasn't quite that kind or perhaps not that close. Tell me some of the things she did do here in the house, though.

A: She cleaned everything for us, didn't she? She was just like the family. But I don't know what you mean by doing what things in the house.

Oh, did she do windows, did she wash?

A: She did everything. She washed the paint; she washed the windows; she vacuumed; she dusted; she did everything for us.

Can you recall what sort of wages she was paid?

A: I hate to tell you...a dollar a day.

And that was during what period? You said that she came shortly after you were born?

A: Yes. Well, up through the Depression, that's all she ever did get, I think, was a dollar a day. And after that, they probably paid her more; I don't remember that. But I know Mother used to say she wondered how the poor things lived on what they got when they paid them so little.

Was it your mother's decision or your father's decision to pay her a dollar a day?

A: It was what everybody did around. I don't think it was anyone's decision; I think it was just what everyone did.

Going wage for Washos in general?

A: Yes.

Did she ever make any baskets for your family?

A: Yes, she did. And lots of her baskets are crude ones; they're for the laundry and things, but they were nice. And then she gave me a darling, little basket that she said was the first basket that she'd ever made. She gave it to me, which I have and which I'm very sentimental about.

The Indians used to bring baskets here to sell when they didn't have any money, and

Mother would buy them because she loved baskets. And I could never tell you what she paid for them, but not very much, I'm sure -. -\$5 or \$10 at the most for anything, probably.

Did the men ever make anything for sale? The Washo Indian men?

A: Nothing that I've ever seen. The Indians did the beadwork, too. And some of their beadwork, what they did to the belts, was nice—the little beads.

Did you play with any Indian children when you were a child?

A: Yes, we all used to play with the Indian children! [laughing] Susie had a cousin, and she had 2 children that are about our ages, and we used to play with them. I don't know what we played outside. I don't remember. But we played with them.

That was never any problem, as far as your parents were concerned?

A: No. My son played with Indians, because they were always around. Whenever they'd come, they'd bring their children, you know. And if you have children, the children all play together.

You mentioned that there were Indians working on the ranch up through the Depression.

A: I can't say when they didn't work here any more. I really don't know. Susie worked for us up until then, but I don't know about the other part of it—the men.

Before we move on to talk about some of the structures that are on this ranch, I'd like to

ask again about the operations of the ranch. I gather from what you've been telling me that you were never very intimately involved with the running of the ranch, but I'm going to go ahead and ask you anyway about some changes that occurred in ranching here in the valley, particularly in the period following the Depression. Mechanization came in, the price of land began to go up; there were a number of different things that had an effect on the size and the operations of many of the ranches here. Do you have any personal knowledge of how the Dangberg operations were changed in the period following the Second World War?

A: I really don't know. It was mechanized, but not till after World War II.

Well, what about the decision finally to sell off a large portion of the Dangberg holdings? I'm a little confused as to how that came about and to who was involved in that decision.

A: I don't remember that very much was sold, until the whole ranch was sold.

That's what I'm talking about—the decision to sell the whole ranch, or most of it. Of course, you still occupy some land here; there's a portion of the holdings that were never sold.

A: Yes. But it really has all been sold. Grace Dangberg and Jean Sanford...there were 2 women left, and they sold; they just wanted to sell; they wanted out, apparently. Nobody else was asked.

And you and your sister weren't asked?

A: We were not asked a thing. We were sick about it because we did not approve of it. We think they could have had a good

manager and managed all right, but they had poor help.

Do you care to discuss this at all, the decision to sell the ranch?

A: I don't know what to discuss about it, except that we were never asked anything about it. Had we been, we would never have wanted to have it [sold] . We had a friend who helped us through all this; he was a gentleman from Washington. His name was Frank ImMasche.

He'd been a livestock economist with the Federal Farm Board, and he helped us through all of the struggles that we had for these many years. He had been all over the United States and seen ranches everywhere, and he said this was the most perfect ranch in the United States. He was very interested in seeing it run correctly. He used to go over and tell Grace that he'd like to help—he would get somebody; he'd like to do something about it. She would never listen to him—because he worked for the federal government, he was no good. And he was sick about it, too. Since, he's passed away.

We were all sick about selling it because it's very hard to get a huge piece of property together like this. Very, very hard. No one'll ever do it again around here.

When my grandfather died, there was 20,000 acres on the ranch, I believe. When my father died, there were 48,000. He really did increase the size of it a great, great deal.

Did he ever talk to you about his method for increasing the size of the ranch? Do you know how he managed to be so successful in doing that?

A: I really don't know. He always said that you couldn't do well if you had small

operations. You could do better with a big operation.

Yes, well, he certainly had a big one! [laughs]

A: And he wanted a big operation! [laughing]

Well, why don't we spend some time now talking about the various buildings that are on this ranch? Let's start with this main building that we're sitting in right now. It's a brick structure. When was it erected?

A: This part [the current living room] was put on by Mother and Dad when Grandmother left us and went to Berkeley and had a home. Mother and Dad took over this house. Then this brick end was put on...the fireplace. Before, that had just been Grandmother's parlor up there.

The first part of the house [that was built was what is now] the library. That was Grandfather's kitchen, and that was what he had in 1857. Behind that was his cellar. And he had his...the parlor was his living room and his bedroom there. Then when Mother and Dad were married, they put this wing on, when...or when Grandmother left, they put this wing on. When Mother and Dad were married, they put the other wing on the house.

You told me something about the hired hands living in part of the main structure, I guess, until your mother and father were married, and they had to build a separate bunkhouse?

A: No, they used to eat in the dining room with the family all at the same time; the men ate at one end and the family at the other end. And when Mother and Dad were married,

they put a men's dining room on the other side of the kitchen, so that the cook could cook for 2 dining rooms—for the family dining room and the help's dining room.

Most of the main portion of the house is made out of brick, I believe, isn't it?

A: No, the very first part is logs covered with lath plaster.

I see. And that's never been changed; it's still logs and lath plaster?

A:...Still logs and lath plaster. That funny, old plaster.

But the outlying portions are brick?

A: This is the only [brick room]. The other is all clapboard and.... And most of it is logs, isn't it? Most of the house is built out of logs. The lumber in the attic is the most beautiful lumber; it's all hand-hewn lumber. We were always terrified of fires around. We'd watch everything. All the time we were so afraid!

Did the bricks come from a local brickyard?

A: They came from the Reno Press Brick Company, I think.

Out toward the back, some of the farm buildings back there are very interesting. When was the barn built?

A: The barn was built in the early 1870s.

Do you know anything about who built it?

A: Well, Mr. Heimsoth, who had been here in those years, said that a man by the

name of Mr. Lewis built it. And he had built 3 barns around; he built one at a neighbor's and another one...I don't know where the other one was.

What's the name of the neighbor that he built one at?

A: Roy Heise. Their barn burned down a few years ago.

And you say he built a third one somewhere else?

A: I don't know where it was.

Does it have any particularly distinctive style? Does it look different from other barns in the valley?

A: That's what they say—that these barns are different, that Mr. Lewis's barns are different; there were 3 of them. And Mr. Heimsoth told the Heises about this. That's how we got our information about it: from the Heises, from her uncle who had been here when it happened.

Did he tell them how the barns were different from other barns? In what way?

A: I don't remember that they said that. I could ask them.

We took a peek through the door that day we were out. We looked through the barn door and noticed that the stalls were all numbered, and they looked a little different from the kind that you see in other barns.

A: The lumber out there is all hand-hewn lumber, too. And the nails were square nails.

Was that barn the only one on the Home Ranch over all these years?

A: No, we've had other barns. There was a barn just up in back of the house over here, where they put baled hay. And that was huge... it was huge; it was even larger than this barn. Then we had another little brick barn that was so nice, and they used it to get their cattle ready for shows. The wind blew that down, and the wind blew this one down. We've had great....

The wind has done some damage, hasn't it?

A: Really terrible wind damage, yes. You see, it blew the wall out of the hide house out there.

What is a hide house? That's a term I'm not familiar with.

A: Well, where they butchered their animals—their sheep and their cattle—they have hides. And they put them in the hide house and put the rock salt between them and put them in bins. And then they were sold for leather, you know.

That's that brick building out there, that is partially collapsed?

A: Yes, that was the hide house.

About when was that built?

A: Nineteen-eighteen.

Do you know who built it?

A: I don't know. I know Mike Fisher's grandfather worked on it, and I don't know who did it.

I'll have to talk to Mike Fisher about it, then.

A: He knows that his grandfather was out here; his grandfather talked to him a lot about it. And he remembers putting all the bricks up at Buckeye [a Dangberg sheep operation in the east-central part of the valley, against the foothills of the Pine Nut Range] and here.

You have what looked like almost a big packinghouse back there.

A: Yes, it was a butcher. We called it the butcher shop. They butchered the meat for all of the ranches in there.

For all the ranches in the Carson Valley?

A: No. [For all the ranches in] the Dangberg Company. Because every ranch had a kitchen. There was one at the Sheep Camp and one at Buckeye and one here and one at the Klauber Ranch. The butcher used to go out and take orders from people. All the people that worked on the ranch to the families that worked on the ranch, they all got their meat from the butcher shop. And it didn't cost them anything until Graham Sanford came in [became active in the affairs of the Dangberg Company]; then he charged everybody for their meat. But before that, everybody had their meat for nothing.

When did Graham Sanford come in?

A: This is awful; I really don't know. I could look it up and see, but I don't remember exactly.

We'll take it up some other time, then. There's a very interesting little brick structure off to the northeast here that looks like almost like a little schoolhouse or something. What is that?

A: That was the brick house that they built at the same time they built these others in 1918. That was a bunkhouse for the Indians, where they lived.

They bunked separately from the white crew?

A: Yes. They never had the Indians and the white crew together...never. They didn't even eat at the same tables here. I don't know if they did that everyplace, but they did it here.

About how many men would that [bunkhouse] accommodate?

A: Oh, we used to have 6 Indians in there. Then when the Indians left, the cook took over, and that was a cook house.

You said the Indians ate separately from the whites. Did they eat different kinds of food?

A: No. They had the same kind of food, but they just had another table. It's just like in the South, isn't it?

Very much so. What other buildings are there out there?

A: The men's house.

Yes. Tell me about that one.

A: That's a bunkhouse, too, That was for the other....

That was built when?

A: You know, I don't really know, but I think probably sometime in the late 1870s or 1880s. Probably in there. There had been another one closer to the house over here,

and they tore that down and put this one there—put up a new one.

Are there any other buildings back there? I'm trying to think in my own mind's eye; I don't recall there being any others in this particular area. Have we left one out?

A: The cellar, which is stone...which is a gorgeous cellar, When Grandfather built that, I really don't know. But Grandma said [and Margaret believes] they brought the stone from where they got the stone for the [state] prison, in ox...with oxen to build that cellar. It's all stone; the floors are stone, and everything's stone. They had a sauerkraut room there where they put all their sauerkraut, and put it in their barrels. They had a fruit closet for their canned fruit. They had a meat room; when they did their hams and bacons and things, they brought them in there and hung them in there. And then there was the milk room, where the man always brought the milk.

Every night in the summertime the cellar was open all over, and it would get so nice and cool; and early in the morning everything was closed. It was marvelously cool all day—it was a wonderful cellar! [laughs]

Would you go in there during the summertime—go in there just to stay cool?

A: Yes, if we could. It was always cool and nice. Kept the food beautifully, you know, because for years they didn't have refrigerators.

Did you have a smokehouse?

A: It's in back of the slaughterhouse out there. It's right in there; it's a little room where they smoked in there.

What about a blacksmith shop?

A: There was a little blacksmith shop on the other side of the barn, and I think Uncle John tore that down when he and Graham took over.

When we come out later on, we'd like to have you come with us and take a look at not only the structures that are right around here, but also if you can give us some idea as to where some of the Indian houses may have been located, we'll be able to do some investigating out there and maybe find some things that are remains from it.

A: That property belongs to the Hickeys now. Do you suppose they'd say anything if we went out...?

We'll certainly check with them in advance.

M: Mike Hickey's the one...who started that subdivision and everything. I don't know where he is.

We've been talking about buildings, but let's once again change the subject. I think we've covered all of the buildings, and I want to do that in greater detail with video anyway. But now if you can think back and remember any stories that your grandparents may have passed on to you, or that your parents may have told you, that would illustrate what life was like here in the Carson Valley in times gone by, I'd sure like to hear them. I understand that your grandmother used to tell you about crossing the plains in 1864?

M: Yes. How many months did it take them? I don't know. But they came out here because they had relatives in California, and they were going to settle in California. But

they stopped in Carson [City] where they also had relatives, and the relatives in Carson persuaded them to stay here. So eventually they settled down here at what we call the Ferris Ranch.

That's at the northern end of Carson Valley, isn't it?

A: It's not very far from us, really.

M: About 4 miles from here. That building that they had originally has been moved to the Sheep Camp. Then they made a living quarters for some of the people that work there now at the Sheep Camp. And I don't know what else.

But Grandmother used to tell us about one time their guide got word that the Indians were coming, so they put all the wagons in a circle. I don't know how many wagons they had; I don't think she ever told us. But they put all the wagons in a circle, and everybody hid inside those wagons, and the Indians never came. [laughs] So that was it, and just one time that they had a scare like that. That's all I remember.

How old was your grandmother when she came out here in 1864?

M: When they crossed the plains, she was 16 years old. Her sister, my Aunt Mame, was just a baby in arms. What was it, "Eighteen-something Blue Eyes," they called her? Do you remember that?

A: "Eighteen-sixty-four Blue Eyes," yes.

M: Eighteen-sixty-four Blue Eyes.

That was the name of the baby?

A: No, they called her Mame, but nicknamed her Eighteen-sixty-four Blue

Eyes because they had come across the plains in that year.

What was your grandmother's maiden name?

A: Margaret Ferris; she was a Ferris. And those are [portraits of] the Ferrises up...

...on the wall behind us, yes.

A: They are Grandmother's mother and father.

How did she meet your grandfather?

A: Somebody said she met him in Carson the first night that they came here. I really don't know. I know that he used to come and see her at the Ferris house down here, and they (her brothers and sisters) said they were all peeking through the cracks. They didn't want her to marry him because he was a German, and they thought Germans were cruel to their wives. They loved their sister, and they didn't want her to marry him. [laughter] But she did.

And the Ferrises were of English extraction?

A: Yes, they were English.

M: Grandfather was much older than Grandmother. When she came here to live at this house, after they were married, he used to go down in the fields there to hay and whatever he had to do, and she would walk out to meet him. She said those mountains [the lofty peaks of the Sierra Nevada that rise up to the west of the Dangberg Home Ranch] were just pressing her down; she just felt so terrible! Just...what do you call...?

A: Claustrophobia

M: Claustrophobia, I think, was what she had.

A: She just knew the rolling hills in Illinois. She didn't like these big mountains at all, when she was young, but later she loved the mountains.

You know what she called Grandfather until a long time after they were married? She called him Mr. Dangberg! [laughs] She always laughed about that; she called him Mr. Dangberg for the longest time!

And what did he call her?

A: I don't know what he called her. Probably couldn't talk very well. [laughs]

Your grandfather spoke German, primarily?

A: Yes.

So there would have been a little problem with communication, wouldn't there?

A: He apparently learned how to speak English very well...but I think so! [laughing]

Was your grandfather Lutheran?

A: In Germany he was, but not in this country. He would not let his family belong to the Lutheran church here; he said it was not his Lutheran church. So none of the family were Lutherans.

How was the family brought up, then?

A: Well, there was always a Methodist church here, and here we went to the Methodist church. My grandmother was really a strong Presbyterian. So when we left here, we were always in the Presbyterian churches with her.

Did that cause any problem when your grandfather and grandmother were married, she being a Presbyterian and he being at least a form of Lutheran?

A: I doubt that I know; I never heard that it did. I don't know where they were married even. I never heard her talk about their wedding.

M: Steamboat Springs.

A: They went to Steamboat Spring on their wedding trip.

M: Yes.

A: [laughs] Horse and buggy! [laughs] We do have a bit of her wedding dress left. She cut it up and put it on a doll for her daughter, and so we have a little bit of Grandmother's wedding dress left.

I understand that the Ferrises are the people who were responsible for inventing the Ferris Wheel.

A: Their son was.

Do you know anything about that?

A: I can give you an article to read in the book that I have—that's a genealogy of the Ferris family; that has lots about the wheel in it and about George Ferris.

Yes, I'd like to see that. You were going to tell me a few things about your mother's desire to have a place of her own. In fact, I guess that she and your father had moved in here to the ranch shortly after they were married, is that correct?

A: Yes, they moved in when they were married. Mother never had her own home,

and she would have loved to have had her own home. She used to beg Dad to either buy out the rest of the family or to sell out. And the family wouldn't do it, so they just stayed.

Mother had a stepmother with whom she was not happy at all. And Grandmother was so kind to her. Mother said she could never have been happier, never had anyone nicer to her than Grandmother was.

We were talking earlier about some of the anti-German feeling here in the Carson Valley during the First World War. Can you go on and give me some details of how this was expressed?

A: We knew that we were hated because they said we were Germans, and we really weren't at all. And we heard that we were running around the house...every time there was a German victory, we were waving German flags. We didn't even know what a German flag looked like. We just didn't know anything; we didn't know where the rumors started or anything because we had no feeling.

Would you hear this sort of thing from your schoolmates?

A: No, my mother and father would hear it and bring it home. We didn't hear it in school. Then Margaret was in high school, and she had stopped taking German, and then she left and didn't...went away to school.

M: I finished my junior year there [Douglas County High School], and then I went to boarding school my senior year.

Did you leave after your junior year because of the anti-German...?

M: Yes.

How was that expressed? Tell me what kind of experiences you had in high school that would lead you to leave.

M: I just didn't want to stay around these people because they were looking down at you all the time. And I had a friend that was going to Miss Ransom's school, and she persuaded me to go down there and get away from it all. I don't know what else.

Your senior year was 1918?

M: Yes.

And you went to Miss Ransom's school in California, then, for that?

M: Yes.

What sort of thing was going on in the Douglas County High School? What sort of thing were they doing to you that made you feel you were unwelcome?

M: They didn't really do anything bad to me, but it was just the idea that people were spreading all these rumors around about us. And I just wanted to get away from all the German kids that were in [chuckles]...in my class in high school.

Were those stories being told about all the German families in the valley or just about the Dangbergs?

M: Just about us. I don't think they...they didn't say anything about any of the other people. They were all German, and it was all right. But we weren't really German at all, were we?

A: No.

I understand that both of you remember the flu epidemic that occurred [at about that time]. The epidemic did sweep through the Carson Valley?

A: Yes, it did.

Do you have any recollection at all of that?

A: Just hearing them say that they set up the basement of the high school for a hospital for people to try to take care of them. That's all I remember about it. And I remember that Mother left us for Christmas to be with Margaret.

Margaret, you were stricken with the flu over in California, is that correct?

M: Yes, I was in the infirmary at the boarding school for quite a while. Finally they said that I could leave. The fever had broken, and they let me go to my grandmother's house. I went and I stayed there about a month, I guess, before they let me come home.

You still lived on the ranch in the 1920s?

A: Yes.

There was a period immediately after the First World War when agriculture entered into its own depression. I wonder what effect that may have had here? It's before the Great Depression of the 1930s.

A: The only thing I remember is that always to keep financed, Dad went to San Francisco to the banks down there. I know that he was financed through the German Bank in San Francisco. And when the second depression came along, that was when he got so afraid that maybe the bank would foreclose on their borrowing.

This is the Depression of 1932?

A: No, this was before the Depression, when they floated bonds to keep the ranch going. But he was afraid because they'd always done their financing through San Francisco banks, and they were foreclosing, apparently. It may have been then; I don't remember when because I was just a little girl.

When the Great Depression came in the 1930s, the Dangberg Ranch was one of the few to make it through intact. Can you tell me what you remember about that?

A: I just remember that they had to be financed again—always had to be financed about something—and they [the Roosevelt administration] started the Farm Credit Administration. Through Dad's friendship with Key Pittman [Democrat, U.S. Senator from Nevada, 1912-1940], they were able to get help through that and save the ranch. And it was the only diversified ranch this side of the Mississippi River that survived the Depression.

But due entirely to financing from...?

A: I think that the Federal Land Bank is what really helped them to get through.

You spent some time earlier talking about a friend of the family who was also an inspector.

A: Yes, Frank ImMasche, who helped us. He was a very nice man. He set up the federal Farm Credit Administration in Washington, D.C....really was one of the men that set it up, and he was in the agricultural department. He went around to all the ranches to see if the loans were all right, you know...if they would be all right. He said this was one of the finest

ranches in the United States and one of the most perfectly managed ranches.

Yes, this was during the 1930s?

A: Yes.

I would imagine that by the end of the 1930s you were at least beginning to think about mechanization; certainly most other farms and ranches in this country were by then. Were you still relying entirely on horse-drawn equipment?

A: They really had mostly horse-drawn equipment, I think. They had some harvesters. It seems to me they had a harvester that was mechanized, that Dad left out at Buckeye. And that's all that I remember.

Was there any movement toward mechanization during the Second World War?

A: My father wanted to, but the other members of the family didn't approve of it.

The other brothers who were on the board of directors, along with your father?

A: Yes.

Tell me about that whole discussion over mechanization. Why were they opposed to it?

A: Just because he wanted to, I think! [laughing] I can't think of any other reason.

What sort of plans did your father put forward? What, specifically, did he have in mind?

A: Well, he knew that they wouldn't be able to get men to take care of the fields and put up the hay and all those things during the

war. And mechanization would help do this. With just a few men, you could do a lot more. He knew that manpower would be scarce.

But the other members of the family were opposed, then. So what was the consequence of that?

A: That it was not mechanized during World War II; not till afterwards.

What effect did that have on the operations of the ranch?

A: I really can't tell you. It was probably more expensive to run it, you know, because they would have to pay manpower more, or they couldn't get any manpower. I really don't know that...I know that it just wasn't what Dad wanted at all.

We were talking off the record earlier about a change in attorneys for the corporation. The Dangberg Corporation was established in 1904, I believe?

A: Yes, yes.

Who was the attorney for the corporation when it was established?

A: Mr. Chartz in Carson City was the original attorney for the company. Then later Mr. Sims, who was my father's friend at school, was the attorney. They always called him Bill Sims.

Do you know when he became attorney for the corporation?

A: I don't know, because I was a little girl; I don't remember.

But you do remember something about his role in running the ranch, I take it. What did he do? What was he responsible for?

A: He just did the legal part with family, that was all. After Mr. Sims died, then Mr. Sanford.. they got for their attorney.

This was George Sanford?

A: George Sanford, yes.

This apparently is a pretty important transition, from Mr. Sims to Mr. Sanford. Can you tell me something about the changes that occurred as a consequence of Mr. Sanford coming in as attorney?

A: All I know is Dad had respect for his mind, which was really good. And the man was sick. He was in Carson [City]; they didn't have anything. And Dad got him in the company; he got him in the mill in Minden, in the creamery; everybody else around had him, and... they just had George Sanford. Now, his nephew in Reno says he wouldn't dare to come out here and try to get a....He's an attorney; he wouldn't ever try to do anything out here [in Carson Valley] because you didn't dare to come anyplace where George Sanford was. [laughs]

Why is that?

A: George Sanford was really out for George Sanford! [laughs]

Apparently, when Graham Sanford entered into the picture, things began to change.

A: Yes.

What's his relationship to George Sanford?

A: His son. And he was in the army.

In the Second World War?

A: No, he was a West Point man.

Did I tell you that Uncle George passed away and...? They finally had gotten down to a point where Grandmother still had her 50 percent of the stock, and the children—the 3 boys—had the other part of it. And Uncle George had 33 1/3 shares of stock or something like that. Of course, it went to his wife after he passed away after the Second World War. My father wanted Uncle John and himself to buy Grace Shaw Dangberg's stock; she had nothing. As soon as Uncle George passed away, she was left... they didn't ever send her a penny. She had nothing to live on.

Who had nothing to live on?

A: His widow had nothing to live on, because he'd always had his salary or whatever they got out of the company. And she was just left without anything to live on, and they just cut her off completely. They didn't do anything for her at all; they just tried to push her out with her stock.

Who was "they"? Who was trying to push her out?

A: Who was "they"? I would say George Sanford and the John Dangberg family.

Did they make her an offer for the...?

A: Yes, and Uncle George had said that he would never sell his stock to George Sanford. His wife said that she would scrub floors before she would sell her stock to George Sanford. But George Sanford was determined

to get Grace Shaw Dangberg's stock, and so, through.... He had always been a friend of my father's, and then he turned and was a friend of the John Dangbergs because he saw his chance to get what he wanted to with them. Uncle John got an attorney down there, who was Haws Jepson, originally from the valley, to go and see if he could buy Grace's stock for Uncle John. She thought she was selling it to Uncle John; instead of that, she was selling it to George Sanford for his son Graham Sanford, who was in the army.

Well, how did that deception take place?

A: Apparently George Sanford and Uncle John had this attorney go to see Grace Shaw Dangberg, to say that Uncle John wanted to buy the stock.

And in reality, it was George Sanford who wanted to buy the stock?

A: George Sanford, yes, yes.

And she sold it to the attorney?

A: She sold it, she thought, to John Dangberg through the attorney. She thought she was selling it to John Dangberg.

And we had been trying and trying to get her stock, but we didn't have the money right now. And she needed money; she had nothing. They'd left her with...they just pushed her out without anything. They really got rid of her as fast as they could, without a thing in the world, and she needed it.... And she thought she was selling it to Uncle John.

So George Sanford or Graham Sanford wound up with 33 percent of the Dangberg Corporation, is that correct?

A: Not a third; not a third even.

M: When Grandmother passed away, her stock was divided. Grace and Doris got a lot more than we did, because there were only 2 of them.

A: And 4 of us. [laughs] But it's the same amount in each family. They got more stock because there were 2 of them and 4 of us, but it was the same amount of stock. When Grandmother passed away, she left stock to all of us. We gave ours to Dad.

"To all of us"—do you mean to all of the grandchildren?

A: To all the grandchildren and daughters-in-law.

An equal share to each family?

A: To the 2 ranch families—the John Dangberg family and our family—she divided her stock between us. And her daughter, too. And that's how that happened.

So at any rate, Graham Sanford may have not wound up with a third of the stock, but he did wind up with a substantial block of stock?

A: Yes. I have known how many shares they all had. It's so long since I've done...I've forgotten it now.

[Several days after their tape-recorded comments, Mrs. Achard and Mrs. McDonald were able to provide further information. Based on papers in their possession, they reported that George Sanford secured 25,583 1/3 shares of Dangberg Corporation stock. They believe that the stock subsequently passed to George Sanford's son and daughter.]

What I'm trying to get at, then, is who was actually running the ranch at that point?

A: John Dangberg was supposed to be running it. And Grace Dangberg was in the office. They pushed everybody out. The man who had been the bookkeeper and knew everything on the ranch for years and years and years left the ranch. The man who had been the foreman at Buckeye left the ranch. All the good....

Who was the man who was the foreman at Buckeye?

A: Lou Falletti, who was perfectly marvelous. He was a wonderful, wonderful man. And they had him. They had Lisle McGinnis in the office, who was a wonderful man. They had just marvelous men that took care of these things.....All those men left, because they did not like what was happening.

Well, what did happen, then, as a consequence of this change in management?

A: The ranch just went to pieces. No one said that it did, but it did.

For what reasons? What did they do?

M: They didn't have a good foreman.

A: And they didn't know.

M: They didn't know ranching at all, and they wouldn't take any advice from anybody they knew at all. I don't know how they thought they did, but they did. Graham knew nothing about cattle, about sheep, about the...

A: Irrigating.

M:...the growing of the crops. Anything about the ranch, he didn't know; he just had to take somebody else's word for it. But he just wouldn't listen to the people that could really help him.

A: They changed the banks of the river. They built them way up so that the water didn't go out, which knocked out the boxes.

It built up water pressure so high that it knocked out the...?

A: The boxes, yes. And then for the hay, they never did get their hay in. You'd go out in the meadows—those beautiful, beautiful meadows that they had at Buckeye—and you'd find bales of hay in the middle of...alfalfa that was coming up as high as the bales of hay; nothing had ever been put away. The fields just went to pieces, didn't they?

Now, this is in the 1950s that we're talking about here?

A: Nineteen-forties and fifties, yes. It would be the 1950s, wouldn't it?

Earlier on you had told me that there had been some resistance to mechanization. I guess that Graham Sanford had agreed with that?

A: No, Graham wasn't here then.

What was his feeling about it once he and John took over?

A: Then I think he did mechanization because he thought that was fun; it was a toy for him. But he got things, didn't he? Graham did.

And they built a feedlot at the Sheep Camp, which was an utter mistake, I think.

It was a huge and expensive thing where they fed cattle. They lost lots of cattle because they weren't careful with cutting the bales of hay, and the wire would get in them. They'd throw cattle [carcasses] out in the dumps like anything when they were all dead.

They put this expensive thing out there to feed the cattle, and the cattle went to pieces anyway; their cattle were not good. I don't know what they did. They just didn't know how to buy.

You and your sister continued to derive some of your income from the ranch at that time?

A: No. We had no income from the ranch for how many years?

Was the ranch not paying any dividends?

A: Only one dividend in all those years, one dividend.

When was that?

A: I wish I could remember. Just one dividend! I'd have to go back to our records and see, but I don't remember. Just one dividend in all the years. But never did get a cent, not a cent; Mother didn't have a cent; none of us had a cent. That was why we worked.

So it was not a profitable operation, then?

A: Apparently not a profitable operation! [laughing] Doesn't look like it. Maybe for some people; not for us.

Had it been a profitable operation prior to the Second World War?

A: I think it must have been. It took marvelous care of all the families; it took care

of every family on the ranch. It took care of my grandmother in Berkeley; it took care of the John Dangberg family; it took care of Uncle George; it took care of us. It took care of everybody and still was growing. That's why we wonder about everything.

So when did it cease to be profitable?

A: When did they cease giving Dad any income? They stopped giving him even an income.

But he was on the board of directors.

A: Yes.

Surely, he must have drawn some salary as a director.

A: They had nothing. We had nothing.

What about the other members of the family?

A: They said they didn't either.

M: They all got \$500 a month.

A: For years, but not....Do you know when they stopped giving Dad anything?

M: Yes.

A: When did that happen?

M: Oh, it must have been 1940, wasn't it?

A: I don't remember. A man who had been so proud and who had done so much for everybody and everything. It was one of the hard... I broke my heart for him. The things that we saw happen just broke out hearts.

What can you tell me about the ultimate decision to sell the ranch [in the late 1970s]?

A: It's not all sold to Bentley [a Minden, Nevada corporation]—just part of it. Most of it, it belongs to Jack Anderson from Sacramento. He is a very able man who has done marvelous things with ranches. He is the biggest tomato grower in the world. He's done a very good job. He has marvelous equipment; he brings it up from Sacramento there. It's just really well done now. But they say that it'll take them years, it ever they can correct all the terrible errors that were made when Graham was doing it.

Such as what? What kind of errors remained?

A: The rivers, the fields....

Oh, the irrigation has to be redone?

A: The fields and that sort of thing. I don't think irrigation....

M: They used to rotate the crops all the time you know. When Lou Falletti was the foreman, they rotated the crops, like the alfalfa and the grain; then the alfalfa would be sown, and then they'd replenish it with something else. I don't think Graham did that.

A: He didn't do that. And the sheep were just beautiful, beautiful sheep. I can remember Fred Dressler saying to us one time that they were one of the real assets of the ranch. They got such wonderful prices for these marvelous bucks they had. I think the bucks [sometimes brought a profit sufficient to pay operating expenses for the ranch for a year].

That's not a pretty picture you've painted of the declining years of the ranch.

A: No.

Was it finally sold because it was no longer profitable, or was there some other reason for...?

M: They were losing money.

A: They were losing money—the 2 women. And then they didn't know what they were doing.

Two women—[Miss] Grace [Dangberg] and who else?

A: And Jean Sanford, Graham's wife.

How did Jean Sanford acquire an interest in it?

A: Graham Sanford; she was his widow. Jean worked in the office with Graham all the time. I guess she thought she knew, I don't know. But office work doesn't run a ranch.

M: No, the way they always made money before, it was a diversified ranch. And maybe one year the sheep would have a good price; then they'd make money on the sheep. And the next year, if the sheep didn't make so much, the cattle made more. And the same way with the crops—the hay or alfalfa, whatever they had. One year would be good, and then the next year they'd have something else. So it balanced that way all the time.

A: They had wheat and oats and everything. ...they sold everything.

So after the Sanfords and John Dangberg family took over, they no longer diversified? Is that what you're saying?

A: They got rid of so much, so many of the sheep. The cattle went down....

M: Lost money on the cattle. They decided that Herefords weren't so good, so then they got Black Angus in here. And I don't know, they didn't seem to know how to buy and sell cattle. They didn't really know.

A: Well, you see your dad selling cattle on the telephone, and he would quibble about a quarter of a point. I suppose you can get money that way, [laughing] I don't know!

Oh, I understand that they used their 2-year-old Angus for calving instead of their 3-year-olds. And so they could get one whole year more out of a cow than they could with the Herefords.

You were telling me that Angus dropped smaller calves, and therefore....

A: Yes, they have smaller calves.

Therefore, they can [be bred] at the age of 2 rather than 3?

A: At the age of 2, yes.

Another decision that I'm interested in is the decision to raise the height of the [river banks]. What was the reasoning behind that?

A: Yes, they raised the height of the banks, and that pushed all the water down against the boxes. Then they lost... I don't know how many boxes they've lost around here, and bridges.

M: Pressure.

What bridges washed out?

A: Our usual way of coming in here was to the north here. The way you came

in today is not our usual way. But it's a road that winds through the darling little meadow, and there were about 4 bridges there. There were 2 of those bridges out in that meadow that we used to come in; those are gone. And there were boxes in the West Fork; there was another one at the Klauber Ranch—all those went out.

Prior to raising the height of the banks, what happened to the water? Was it allowed to spill over the banks?

M: It spread out over the land. Grandfather always said it made the land more fertile.

A: Because it has silt in it, you know.

How long has it been since that happened?

A: I would say in the 1950s sometime.

M: Some went out before that....

A: They were fussing with the.. .army engineers and Graham were fussing about the rivers.

M: It went like this: the banks were so high, the pressure was so great, the bridges couldn't possibly stand up under that pressure.

A: There was always high water in the spring. And that was when it was. It's not really flood; it's just high water.

All right, well, we've pretty well covered the topics that I had intended to discuss with you today. We will return to do some work with video cameras later on. But before I end this interview today, is there anything either of you

would care to add to what we've been talking about, or are there any subjects you'd like to bring up yourselves that haven't been discussed yet?

A: I really can't think of anything. If I do, I'll tell you.

Thank you.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Dangberg Home Ranch, ca. 1910. Incorporated into the structure
is the original cabin built by H. F. Dangberg in 1857.



A Chinese cook in the kitchen of the Dangberg Home Ranch, ca. 1898.

Photos courtesy of Special Collections, University of Nevada Reno Library:
Achard-McDonald collection.

APPENDIX: LETTER FROM H. F. DANBERG

-FACSIMILE-

NOVEMBER 1st, 1939

A STORY FROM 1902 TO 1937 AND
NOTE STATEMENTS

AND RECORDS FROM DATE 1937 TO
THIS

DATE 1939

I, H. F. DANGBERG formulated the Corporation of the H. F. DANGBERG LAND AND LIVE STOCK COMPANY, March 7, 1902, and when father Dangberg grew weak from his final illness, held his hand at his request to make X for his signature, thus passing his estate to mother and the family without will or contest and thus a great saving.

PRIOR TO FATHER'S DEATH I consummated and financed the Cohn, Kirman and Lewis Ranch deal through Richard Kirman

and Charley Mack in the rooms of the Bullion and Exchange Bank, Carson City, selling parts of said purchase and retaining the Klauber Ranch, The Blackwell Ranch and the Kirman Ranch 6000 acres of land worth approximately \$200,000.00. The properties sold brought a price equal to price paid for all the tracts.

THE KLAUBER AND BLACKWELL areas are those that had and hold the earliest water rights on East and West Forks of the Carson River, late fifties and early sixties, very comparable with the rights of the Dangberg Home Ranch.

PRIOR TO THIS purchased the Cohn cattle at \$8.00 per head, sold enough beef from herd in spring to pay the cost and had 1000 left at no cost, and could go on to the Boyd and many deals through the years since that have resulted in great margins.

LOOKING BACKWARD comes to mind the promotions over the many years of building the assets of this Company and Com-

munity Enterprises all with not too much selfish thought, but thinking of this beautiful country, its people, friends and all the family, their future, their security and happiness, not failing to mention the help and support of the people, friends and family. Memory takes me back to things accomplished and many bitter fights and sleepless nights.

JUST A FEW – 1. The Telephone, 2. The Town Site and Town, 3. The Flour Mill, 4. Railroad, 5. The Creamery, 6. The County Seat, 7. The Wool Warehouse, 8. The Bank, 9. Forming Water Users Association, 10. The Pine Nut Stock Growers Association, and many, many other moves and acts in behalf of the community and this Company.

THE COST OF PROMOTION is hard to estimate or understand by any one who has not been through the mill:- promotion spells contacts and the contacts of years ago and years gone by were decidedly more costly than contacts of today and all should be mindful of the facts that not only money was spent but many years of energy.

In Sincerity,

H. F. Dangberg

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